



April 27, 2005

## **Operation Royal Flush defendant is convicted of crack-cocaine trafficking, faces life imprisonment**

A federal jury today found **Joel Francisco**, of Providence, guilty of trafficking in cocaine and crack cocaine. Francisco was one of thirteen federal defendants charged with drug trafficking as a result of **Operation Royal Flush**, a task force investigation into suspected drug dealing by members and associates of the Almighty Latin King nation. Because he has prior drug convictions, Francisco, 32, faces mandatory life imprisonment.

United States Attorney Robert Clark Corrente announced the verdict, which the jury returned today in U.S. District Court, Providence, after deliberating less than an hour following a three-day trial before U.S. District Court Judge Mary M. Lisi.

During the trial, Assistant U.S. Attorneys Mary E. Rogers and Stephen G. Dambruch presented evidence that task force investigators, which included **Providence Police** detectives and **Drug Enforcement Administration** agents, seized nearly a kilogram of cocaine on October 24 from Francisco's apartment at 64 Dexter Street. The cocaine, stashed in ten plastic bags hidden behind the toilet, consisted of about 890 grams of powder cocaine and about 100 grams of crack cocaine.

The jury also heard recordings of Francisco, whose street nickname is "Joey Crack," discussing drug deals in coded language over his telephone, conversations that agents intercepted during court-authorized wire-taps.

-more-

Detectives arrested Francisco at his mother's house the same day that they found the cocaine at the Dexter Street apartment, which Francisco was renting. He admitted to detectives that the cocaine was his and that he owed his supplier \$25,000 for the kilogram of cocaine, which he had obtained the day before he was arrested. Francisco did not testify at his trial.

The jury found Francisco guilty of possessing with intent to distribute 500 grams or more of cocaine and possessing with intent to distribute 50 grams or more of crack cocaine.

Ordinarily, the cocaine offense would carry a penalty of five to 40 years imprisonment and the crack offense ten years to life. However, the U.S. Attorney cited Francisco's two prior drug-trafficking convictions in 1998 and, under federal sentencing law, those prior convictions mandate a life term for any subsequent conviction for crack cocaine trafficking. There is also a maximum \$4,000,000 fine. Sentencing is scheduled for July 22.

Francisco still faces drug-trafficking charges in three other indictments stemming from Operation Royal Flush.

Nine other federal defendants have pleaded guilty to federal charges:

*(addresses are in Providence unless otherwise indicated)*

- **Elliot Rivera Cruz**, 752 Atwells Avenue, DOB 10/4/71 – pleaded guilty to conspiracy to distribute crack cocaine;
- **Anthony Goris**, 86 Florence Street, 3/08/78 – pleaded guilty to conspiracy to distribute marijuana; possessing with intent to distribute cocaine; and possessing a firearm in connection with a drug-trafficking offense;
- **David Batista**, 48 McClellan Street, 11/23/76 – pleaded guilty to conspiracy to distribute marijuana, and being a felon in possession of a firearm;
- **Xiomara Mercedes**, 35 Cross Street, Lawrence, MA, 2/5/74 – pleaded guilty to conspiracy to distribute marijuana;

- **William Cifredo**, 72 Aurault Street, 6/17/74 – pleaded guilty to conspiracy to distribute crack cocaine, and possessing with intent to distribute cocaine;
- **Reynaldo Rodriguez**, 75 Village Road, Woonsocket, DOB 1/06/78 – pleaded guilty to conspiracy to distribute crack cocaine;
- **Miguel Jusino**, 47 Wesleyan Avenue, 7/06/84 – pleaded guilty to conspiracy to distribute crack cocaine and possessing with intent to distribute crack cocaine;
- **Joel Trinidad**, 93 Lexington Avenue, DOB 5/17/82 – pleaded guilty to conspiracy to distribute crack cocaine and possessing with intent to distribute crack cocaine;
- **Freddie Rodriguez**, 78 Vernon Street, pleaded guilty to possessing with intent to distribute cocaine.

Cifredo has been sentenced to 60 months in federal prison. The other eight defendants are awaiting sentencing. Drug-trafficking charges are pending against four other defendants.

\*\*\*

A multi-agency task force led by **Providence Police** and the **Drug Enforcement Administration** participated in Operation Royal Flush. In addition to Providence Police and DEA, six federal, state, and municipal law enforcement agencies contributed resources: **The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives**, the **Federal Bureau of Investigation**, the **Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement**, the **U.S. Marshals Service**, **Rhode Island State Police**, and **East Providence Police**.

Assistant U.S. Attorneys Rogers and Dambruch are prosecuting the federal cases that resulted from the investigation.